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UNCLAS BANGKOK 003745

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: VOLUNTARY AND FORCED REPATRIATION OF MONTAGNARDS

REF: STATE 104154

1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 4.

2. (SBU) In June 7 discussion with UNHCR Regional Representative Hasim Utkan on other matters, Refcoord took the opportunity to pass along reftel guidance regarding U.S. policy on voluntary and forced repatriation of Montagnards in Cambodia.

3. (SBU) Utkan responded that UNHCR does not promote or encourage repatriation. He also said that Montagnards who have stated an interest in returning to Vietnam have been adequately informed of the situation there, including reports of possible mistreatment of returnees. They also sign declarations that their returns are voluntary. Utkan said that five individuals departed Cambodia for Vietnam on May 27. Of this group, four persons had been recognized by UNHCR as refugees. They informed UNHCR that they had spent too long in Phnom Penh and that there had been no progress on their agenda. UNHCR is awaiting approval from Vietnam for the voluntary return of another six persons. None of the total of 40 persons who have returned to Vietnam recently had been submitted for U.S. resettlement.

4. (SBU) Action request: Noting that the United States opposed involuntary repatriation of so-called "refusenik" refugees to Vietnam, Utkan asked about the U.S. position on involuntary repatriation of Montagnards who had not been granted UNHCR status. Utkan stated that he would ask Assistant Secretary Dewey for clarification on this point when they meet in Hanoi. Please provide guidance.  
BOYCE